

JANUARY 2022 TEACHERS of EXCELLENCE®

Recognizing Excellence in Teaching Through Dedication, Compassion & Knowledge

PROFILE



VALENTINE TORRES,
Business,
Hobart High School,
Hobart

LAKE COUNTY

WHY TEACHING IS MORE THAN A DAY JOB:

Valentine Torres found her calling when she traded the corporate office for a classroom. "I made a big decision in my life to change careers," she says. "I studied all of the career options that were out there for me and teaching just felt like the right move. I left corporate America to teach high school students everything they need to know about the business world. What I love about teaching is the relationships I can build with my students. Teenagers are in the biggest transition period of their lives, and I understand how impactful adults can be in their lives." Torres, who has taught at Hobart High School since 2014, has a bachelor's degree in management as well as a master's in business administration with a focus on management consulting. She sponsors the Business Professionals of America Club, is the mother of a 15-year-old son and 12-year-old daughter and married her husband last summer.

FAVORITE PART OF TEACHING:

Torres recalls helping a student get a job. "This student was in a situation where he needed a job as soon as possible to help pay bills at home because his father was out of work. I have a career closet in my classroom, where other teachers and members of the community donate gently used career clothing. I had the student complete an online application for a local fast-food restaurant, and I put together an outfit for him from the career closet. I quickly coached him on job interview skills and within 15 minutes he was ready to go. I sent him directly to the restaurant and advised him to request an interview for that same day. He has his resume and cover letter with him, showcasing the employment skills he had gained from taking business courses. The next day, the student came to see me and told me he got a same-day interview and they hired him on the spot. He said the manager told him that they had never hired someone so quickly."

PROFILE



CATHIE MITSCH,
Second Grade,
Three Creeks
Elementary School,
Lowell

WHY TEACHING IS MORE THAN A DAY JOB:

"I love the connection I create with my students and their families," Cathie Mitsch says. "I enjoy getting to know them on a personal level. My favorite thing to teach is math. I enjoy watching my students get excited about numbers. Making learning fun is a total must in my classroom." A graduate of Lowell High School and Purdue University, Mitsch has been teaching for 22 years and has been at Three Creeks for four.

FAVORITE PART OF TEACHING:

Mitsch says she loves watching her students grow as people and members of society. "Being a good person and learning to live life is more important to me than any test score. It is wonderful when former students contact me to let me know how much I impacted their lives. It's nice to know I did make a difference."

PROFILE



JENNIFER WEEKS,
Seventh Grade,
Nativity of Our
Savior School,
Portage

PORTER COUNTY

WHY TEACHING IS MORE THAN A DAY JOB:

Jennifer Weeks loves sharing subjects she loves and laughing with her students, but what she prizes above all else is the relationships she builds with her students and their families. "I love teaching at Nativity because our small class size allows me to get to know each of my students and their families really well. I feel like they all become a part of my extended family." Weeks's nurturing extends to fostering dogs - 76 so far. A native of New York, Weeks earned her bachelor's degree in education from the State University of New York Geneseo and her master's degree in special education from Wilmington College. She lives in Portage with her husband, 10-year-old daughter and three dogs.

FAVORITE PART OF TEACHING:

"I have many favorite memories from my teaching career, including teaching a fourth grader how to read, which she had never been able to learn before," Weeks says. "I also taught one of my students with autism to communicate with words. He now speaks in front of large groups to advocate for the autism community. And, just recently, I heard another student say that my classroom 'feels like home.'"

PROFILE



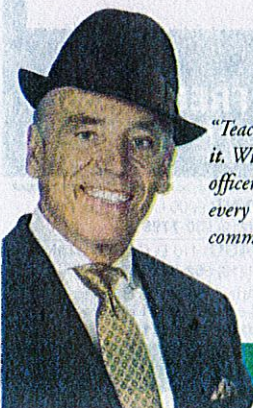
NEVENKA SCHUMACHER,
First Grade,
Union Center
Elementary School,
Valparaiso

WHY TEACHING IS MORE THAN A DAY JOB:

"My love for teaching comes from the passion I have in watching kids grow into the best version of themselves," Nevenka Schumacher says. "I love to see them go from the impossible to the possible and reach new levels of success. Watching children reach new milestones and watching their confidence grow feels like Christmas. Each new achievement, whether it be an academic, social or emotional achievement, is like a new gift for them. My hope is for each student to take something from my classroom that will help them navigate their way through life." Schumacher has taught for 22 years and has coached three sports for middle and high school. She earned her bachelor's degree from Ball State University and her master's degree from Indiana Wesleyan.

FAVORITE PART OF TEACHING:

Schumacher says she is grateful for each sweet gesture shared by her students. "Whether it is the sweet pictures they make for me to hang on my classroom walls, the confident smiles and waves in the hallways and at ball games or invitations to their weddings, I am grateful for the gestures and relationships. It is the ultimate compliment to see these one-time students return as parents. Teaching is not just a job; it is a calling for me. I love every minute of it."

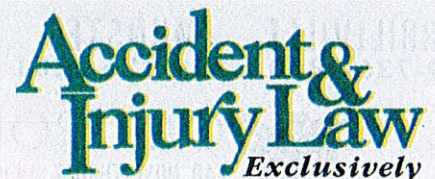


"Teachers provide a foundation for life as we know it. Without them there would be no doctors, police officers, authors, scientists, engineers... virtually every vocation. We appreciate and acknowledge their commitment to making our world a better place."

Best Regards,
Kenneth J. Allen



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